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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training, for Palestine refugees

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/120, reiterated its appeals to all States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to continue and augment the special allocations for grants and scholarships to Palestine refugees, in addition to their contributions to the regular budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Assembly also appealed to all States, specialized agencies and other international bodies to extend assistance for higher education to Palestine refugee students and to contribute towards the establishment of vocational training centres for Palestine refugees. The Assembly furthermore requested UNRWA to act as the recipient and trustee for the special allocations for grants and scholarships, and appealed to all States, specialized agencies and the United Nations University to contribute generously to the Palestinian universities in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. Finally, it requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution.

The present report details the fellowships and scholarships contributed by the Governments of Japan and Switzerland through UNRWA to Palestine refugees. It also outlines the scholarships and fellowships provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Development Research Centre and other non-governmental organizations.

* A/58/150.

** The document was submitted late to the conference services without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in a footnote to the document.

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1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of paragraph 4 of its resolution 57/120.

2. The report includes the substance of responses from Member States and United Nations agencies to the appeal contained in that resolution, together with reference to further action taken by Member States and United Nations agencies in response to the appeal contained in General Assembly resolutions 32/90 F, 33/112 C, 34/52 C, 35/13 B, 36/146 H, 37/120 D, 38/83 D, 39/99 D, 40/165 D, 41/69 D, 42/69 D, 43/57 D, 44/47 D, 45/73 D, 46/46 D, 47/69 D, 48/40 D, 49/35 D, 50/28, 51/127, 52/60, 53/49, 54/72, 55/126, 56/55 and 57/120. By those resolutions, the Assembly appealed to all States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to augment special allocations for grants and scholarships to Palestine refugees; invited the relevant specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to continue, within their respective spheres of competence, to extend assistance for higher education to Palestine refugee students; and requested the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to act as the recipient and trustee for such special allocations for grants and scholarships and to award them to qualified refugee candidates.

3. In 2002/2003, the Government of Japan awarded 12 fellowships through UNRWA to Palestine refugees who were employed by UNRWA as vocational training staff at the eight vocational training centres in the UNRWA area of operations. These were processed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. A review of that programme from its inception in 1985 and until 2002 shows that a total of 211 scholarships were offered by the Government of Japan, of which 199 have been processed. In 1989, the Government of Japan contributed $1 million, to be spent over a five-year period, towards the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. The recipients were Palestine refugee students from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Between 1993 and 2001, 161 students graduated from this programme in a wide range of specializations. The Government of Japan contributed an additional $400,000 in 1992, 1993 and 1994, $500,000 in 1995 and $600,000 in 1996 and 1997, to be spent over a five-year period, towards UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates from the UNRWA area of operations. The recipients were Palestine refugee students. In 1998, the Government of Japan contributed $71,000 for the university scholarship programme. This contribution was used in 1998/1999 to cover the awards of 111 continuing students out of 154 hitherto financed by UNRWA General Fund budget, whose funding had been frozen owing to the financial problems facing UNRWA. Funding of the awards for the remaining 43 students was covered from savings from previous Japanese contributions realized as a consequence of the early graduation of some students and the failure of others. In 1999, owing to the cancellation of the portion of the university scholarship fund that had been financed from the General Fund budget and the fact that funding from donors to finance the subprogramme was not forthcoming, the UNRWA Education Department used the funds already available from the Japanese contribution to finance the studies of most of the students through their graduation. A total of 50 recipients participated in the programme in the academic year 2002/03, while 633 students graduated in the period 1995-2002. Those awards, while not provided specifically in response to the General Assembly resolution, are in keeping with its spirit and intent.

4. The Government of Switzerland contributed $1,703,581 between 1989 and 1996 and $338,000 in 1997 to the UNRWA scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. Of the 315 students who benefited from part of the 1997 Swiss contribution for one year only, 67 graduated in 1998, seven failed and 87 were granted scholarships in 1998/1999 from savings realized from previous Swiss contributions, while the remaining continuing 154 students were financed in 1998/1999 from other sources (see para. 3 above). In 1999, owing to the cancellation of a portion of the university scholarship fund financed from the UNRWA General Fund budget and the lack of funding from donors for the subprogramme, the UNRWA Education Department used funds already available from the Swiss contribution to finance the graduation of the majority of students. The number of students from the five fields of the UNRWA area of operations in the academic year 2002/03 was six. Between 1993 and 2002, 430 students graduated, and in the academic year 2001/02, one student failed.

5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as part of its long-standing agreement with UNRWA and within the framework of the regular programme regarding scholarships for Palestinians, granted 10 scholarships in favour of Palestinian students during the 2001-2002 biennium.

6. In academic year 2002/03, the World Health Organization provided a total of 15 fellowships/study tours for qualified Palestinian candidates, nominated by the Palestinian Authority, enrolled in various specializations.

7. In July 2000, the International Development Research Centre pledged $1,314,607 to UNRWA to finance the Scholarship Fund for Palestine Refugee Women in Lebanon over a period of six years. In academic year 2002/03, 90 students were enrolled in specializations at Lebanese universities.

8. Mr. Samer Hamada pledged $80,000 to UNRWA over a period of four years ($20,000 per year), beginning in 2000/01, to finance university-level study for 20 special hardship case students in Jordan. During academic year 2000/01, 20 students were enrolled in 12 specializations at various Jordanian universities.

9. In 2000/01, the Cisco Learning Institute/International Youth Foundation Project in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip funded 60 training scholarships under the Cisco Networking Academy Programme. These scholarships were distributed to 24 students in the Gaza Strip and 36 students in the West Bank.

10. In 2001/02, the Emergency Appeal Programme in the West Bank funded 50 scholarships to students who are enrolled in 13 specializations at 14 universities.